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# Bulletin of the Rhode Island Library Association v. 61, no. 9

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# Rhode Island Library Association Bulletin

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## INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM: PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

by Stephen R. Thompson

Last September, as chair of RILA's Intellectual Freedom Committee, I received an Extraordinary Memorandum from ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom. It announced an Intellectual Freedom Leadership Development Institute to be held in May, 1988 in Lisle, Illinois, several miles SSW of Chicago. Its purpose was to "give newly-identified intellectual freedom leaders the information and skills needed to combat assaults on intellectual freedom and attempted restrictions on materials and/or library services, in violation of the Library Bill of Rights." The objectives of the Institute were:

- to acquaint or refresh participants with basic documents, such as the Library Bill of Rights, court decisions, and resources, and their interpretation and application;
- to provide information on pressure groups and other censors, particularly their goals, strategies, and tactics; and,
- to train participants in the most effective strategies to use in countering attacks on intellectual freedom, ranging from PR techniques to lobbying to conducting challenge hearings.

Within eighteen months after the Institute, the participants were obligated to plan and conduct a workshop on these topics in their areas.

With the encouragement and financial support

of the RILA Executive Board, for which I am grateful, I applied and was accepted. I became one of more than fifty-five librarians, library school professors, and media specialists invited to attend this intensive three-day workshop. Though participants included people from all over the United States, there were only three New Englanders: the other two from Maine. Presenters and Institute staff included a lawyer, lobbyists, professors, librarians, ALA-IFC members, and OIF staff.

The Institute probably sounds like true believers preaching to true believers, which in many respects it was. However, I would make the distinction between believing and fully understanding, something I'm not sure those on either side of the censorship fence always do. My reasons for attending the Institute centered around my concern that despite years of involvement--"true believing"--with RILA's IFC, I still needed the reinforcement of a more sound factual base on intellectual freedom issues in order to serve the Committee and Rhode Island libraries better.

A sophisticated preparation is needed, since protests and attempted censorship have been relatively infrequent in recent years locally. Yet, on the national level, we have witnessed the publication of the Attorney General's Commission's report on pornography, the prominence of a conservative political agenda, and the increased visibility of the fundamentalist Christian right.



Though not rampant here, these forces have been diligently at work throughout the country.

As the Institute's literature points out, "the ultimate target [of such pressure groups] is the diversity of thought and products of the imagination that undergird a pluralistic society." The text continues, the casualty of these attacks is the capacity "to think, to analyze, to imagine and to create", often referred to simply as "dumbing down." While no one, not even librarians, is immune from the fears that certain ideas, books, pictures, songs or movies can engender, we do have a professional obligation to separate personal beliefs from our duty to offer to the best of our ability material of various kinds and divergent points of view. Of course, practically speaking, the desire to avoid conflict and the pressures applied by boards, communities, other groups, and individuals cannot be ignored. But decisions based on a firm knowledge of the rights of expression can withstand intense scrutiny.

At the same time, it is important to educate patrons to the idea that their preferences are not everyone's preferences, and cannot be imposed on others. The imposition of certain ways of thinking or the restriction of access to certain material is an exercise of power, not of right. No one should be able to make another think, read, or see only what he feels is right.

A primary idea behind this Leadership Development Institute and, behind the activities, publications, and programs of intellectual freedom committees everywhere, is that the promotion of diversity of thought and freedom of access to information can never cease. These are fundamental tenets of our society and represent basic rights that should not be eroded. However, attacks, both apparent and insidious, against these rights continue with a persistence and an amazing variety that must be matched.

C. James Schmidt, current chair of the ALA IFC, in opening remarks on "why are we here?," pointed out a few recent controversies, ranging from the little-known--an IRS subpoena of circulation records in a Delaware library--to the nationally-known--the debate over the revision of the Western Civilization curriculum at Stanford. Whether the problem is legal or scholarly, similar concepts are involved. Can what a person

reads remain private? Is a curriculum that teaches the "great books" of Western culture constitute a sound education while ignoring the thought of other major cultures? Certainly the IRS feels it has a need and a right to know; proponents of the traditional syllabus are sure which cultural ideas are to be valued. These problems, he felt, touch on or relate to matters of intellectual freedom: need-to-know vs privacy; intolerance of diversity vs toleration; authority vs expression. He observed that often from our faith in certain things comes our fear of things that are different, unusual or new.

Though many excellent sessions were presented, I have chosen to describe five of the most outstanding that contribute to an understanding of the development of intellectual freedom concerns and practices.

The history, development and defense of ALA's intellectual freedom principles were presented by Sue Kamm, spokesperson for the Intellectual Freedom Roundtable. She defined intellectual freedom in its broadest sense as "peoples' ability to seek and obtain information and ideas under the First Amendment without fear of prosecution or persecution, either for those who want information or for those providing it." She noted that there are many legal and traditional or customary constraints on the pure application of the principle. Censorship is not new, nor has it been -- or is it now -- solely the domain of those outside libraries.

Early on, and throughout our history, intentions within libraries were often to provide only what was "wholesome" and "good" and to avoid "shoddy and pernicious books," especially for the young. Most noticeable protests in the profession against this concept and other restrictions did not begin until the 1920's. Yet ALA decided to remain officially silent about Hitler's book burning. The first protest against the banning of a specific publication, a pamphlet used in the Civilian Conservation Corps, occurred in the late '30's.

Negative reaction to Steinbeck's Grapes of Wrath led to the formulation and adoption of the Library's Bill of Rights in 1939. The national IFC was born in 1940. Further refinement and expansion of the principles of free expression advanced through the



following decades, taking into account new topical and political issues, types of material, characteristics of various user groups, and continue up to contemporary concerns with confidentiality and labelling of videos. These principles have been tied closely with statements of librarians' professional ethics, which entail obligations to provide access to materials wanted and needed by all patrons.

She also reviewed the proliferation of groups -- roundtables, sections, state committees -- and publications that have sprung up to form the IFC network. Support can be provided not only in the fight against censorship but also to the fighters, the librarians and others who often come under personal and legal attack. Such support has become a necessity.

Ginny M. Kruse, Librarian at the Cooperative Children's Book Center at the University of Wisconsin/Madison, identified the support groups and materials that might be called upon in defense of challenged materials. For example, the Children's Book Center answers queries for information on specific titles. Typically, defenders would first look for reviews, though in most cases there will be some both "pro" and "con," (One member of the audience, Dorothy Broderick, advocates reviews that don't warn anyone away from a title. They should state who the book is for, not who it isn't for). In addition, one should look for awards given, inclusion on a "best books" list, and citations in the professional literature. General intellectual freedom statements of other pertinent organizations, such as teacher groups, or the International Reading Association, might be useful. Local selection policies are still the first, best resource.

Some books will seem indefensible: there is no paper trail of support; the title condemns itself. She gave examples of a book with a connection to a Saturday morning cartoon; a poor title in an otherwise regularly received and accepted series; a gift or bargain book carelessly added to the collection. In these cases, one may have to stress that a particular theme, topic, format or genre, as exemplified by the title, is acceptable at this level, rather than defending the one title. In general, the principles involved should be a large component of the defense for as long as possible.

If these forms of support are not sufficient to

satisfy the challenger of a specific work, a "challenge hearing" may be necessary. Gene Lanier of East Carolina University, discussed the formal proceedings which might be required for airing a complaint. He emphasized the importance of careful planning, since the opposition is liable to be highly organized. Once a valid, properly filed complaint has been received and reviewed by a committee constituted of various representatives from one's library or school and has not reached a resolution, the complaint can be placed on the governing authority's meeting agenda.

Among recommendations were to seek local media coverage and to provide them with basic, accurate information and documents. The whole community should be made aware of the hearing. At the same time one should solicit speakers to support one's position, determine speaking schedule and duration, set the length of the meeting, estimate the necessary meeting space, arrange for the taping of the proceedings, and, in the end, make clear when a decision will be made (not on the spot!). Overall, clear communication and planning make it obvious who is in charge. One must create what he called "positive pressure."

Paul Putnam of the National Education Association discussed the character, philosophy, goals, and methods of various pressure groups. Although a challenge is stressful, he argued that, if attacked, it can become a benefit by gaining increased readership for the material challenged, new strength from new allies, and a respite from the opposition, at least for a while.

As many have pointed out, the national political climate and leadership have given encouragement and legitimacy to the right and its agenda. Assaults have been made on civil rights law, the public school system, and Federal Court jurisdictions. He acknowledged the prominence of fundamentalist media preachers, groups like the Eagle Forum, the Gablers' textbook crusades, and many other individuals and smaller organizations that share similar goals. He suggested Erling Jorstad's The New Christian Right 1981-1988 as a good study of many of these groups.

He characterized their primary strategy as "destructive criticism." "Destructive criti-



cism" seeks to destroy what it evaluates, and often becomes, if successful, censorship. It may win simply by having taken valuable time and energy and instilling fear. It tries to confuse selection with censorship. In the last instance, it confronts what is essentially positive, expansive, and comparative with what is condemnatory, narrow, and rigid.

There are many inconsistencies between new right programs and beliefs. On the one hand, it advocates less government intrusion; while, on the other, it champions repeated invasions into people's private lives. Their targets are familiar: sex, drug education, global education, pornography, secular humanism. Putnam suggested Connaught Marshner's Blackboard Tyranny for an enumeration of their methods, which often involve disguising the true source of an attack by hiding behind other groups and a general vagueness about actual numbers of adherents.

In conclusion, he, like others, warned that one should not try to stand alone, and in most cases does not need to.

In the liveliest session of the Institute, Arch Lustberg, author of Winning When It Really Counts, demonstrated communication strategies by focussing on handling hostile questioning/interviewing that a librarian might encounter during a censorship incident. Public speaking, he noted, outranks fear of dying in some public opinion polls, but there are ways not only to cope with, but to succeed in handling talking in public and to the media. His demonstration involved interviewing and videotaping three participants before and after discussing his strategies and techniques.

In his view, the segment of the audience to target is, as in lobbying, the group whose minds are not yet made up. They can be won over. He went on to identify the four "weapons" that one has: mind, face, body, and voice. The latter three constitute style, which is necessary to conveying ideas. Among his many suggestions were the admonitions to think, pausing deliberately before answering; to avoid repeating negative buzz words used in hostile questions; and to be willing to admit being unsure without giving up a positive tone or demeanor. Rephrasing a question so one can rebuke its implication and enunciate a policy or a position or clear up a misunderstanding, is an important technique. One's face should be mobile and expressive, as appropriate,

especially utilizing a smile and raised eyebrows to create horizontal lines in one's forehead: an "open" face. Avoid frowning, "closing" or freezing the face and creating vertical lines between the eyes. He also discussed the use, and control, of gestures, posture, voice tone and volume, and breathing. While mastering these techniques would require practice, the demonstration clearly showed an improvement in the participants' response after being shown what they'd done wrong and how to change.

Although the Institute supplied vital background information and theory, the "real" and practical were never out of mind. In fact, the then recent Supreme Court decision upholding a principal's action in removing pages from a class newspaper (*Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier*, 86-836) was on participants' minds. So, too, was the FBI Library Awareness Program. Schmidt and Judith Krug, Director of ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom, were on the CBS national news the Saturday night of the Institute. The issue has been discussed many times before and since in the press, and was a featured topic on Nightline (7/13/88). (See ALA Resolution, page 7. )

Even this condensed version of the Institute's program gives a good idea of the complexity and breadth of the issues of intellectual freedom. One of the clearest messages should be that censorship is not new, is not unique to one place or type of library, but has been dealt with successfully many, many times. I hope Rhode Island librarians will, if the need arises, contact our IFC for further information on these programs or any related matter. We truly want to help, and to offer advice and assistance that is practical, as well as factual and theoretical, and avoids being didactic and dogmatic.

We urge you to commemorate Banned Books Week (September 24 - October 1) appropriately; pick up ALA OIF's new manual and our new handbook; and watch for notice of the workshop we will be holding, probably for the New England region, within the next year.

This account of the Intellectual Freedom Leadership Development Institute is excerpted from a full report on the meeting. For the report, bibliographical information



on sources, or other information on IFC matters, contact Stephen Thompson, Reference Librarian, Rockefeller Library, Brown University.

### SUMMERS TO SPEAK AT RILA CONFERENCE

F. William Summers, President of ALA, will be the President's speaker at the RILA Conference in November. Mr. Summers, dean of the School of Library and Information Science at Florida State University, was inaugurated president of ALA at a banquet given in his honor July 13 during the ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans.

Among the many positions he has held in the library profession as educator, administrator, consultant, and author, Mr. Summers served as Assistant Librarian at Providence Public Library in 1961, becoming Associate Librarian in 1965. During that period he was very active in the "Library Aid Bill," and served as liaison agent between librarians and General Assembly members, subsequently being named a member of the Board of Library Commissioners, which began at that time. He left Providence in 1965 to become State Librarian for Florida.

Recognized as an ardent supporter of civil rights in the sixties, in his inaugural address, Summers emphasized the importance of intellectual freedom as a library concern. He asserted that libraries must continue to uphold this freedom at the same time respecting the privacy of the individual library user in an age when technology makes protecting that privacy more difficult.

Mr. Summers will speak following lunch on Monday, November 14. A full schedule of events will appear in the October Bulletin.

### people

NORMAN DESMARAIS is the author of Acquisitions Systems for Libraries recently published by The Meckler Corporation of Westport, CT and London. This work comprises volume 11 of the Essential Guide to the Library IBM-PC series.

MARY ANNE GOLDA is now Administrative Assistant to the Conference Committee. She has held various library positions in Rhode

Island, including that of cataloger at the Rhode Island State Library.

CATHERINE MELLO ALVES has been appointed Coordinator of the Island Inter-related Library System. She moves to her new post from East Providence Public Library where she was Branch Information Services Librarian.

ANNE McLAUGHLIN is now Children's Librarian at West Warwick Public Library.

ROBERT RETTEW recently was named Reference Librarian at Salve Regina College Library.

### bulletin board

- The Department of State Library Services is now operating from its new location. The complete address is: 300 Richmond Street, Providence, RI 02903-4222. Telephone numbers for DSLS remain the same. An Open House is being planned for sometime in late Fall.

- The Sunrise Corporation recently published Rhode Island Media Listings 1988. Purchase price is \$5.50 per copy and \$.65 per copy for postage. Send to: Sunrise Corporation, 26 Rochambeau Avenue, Providence, RI 02906.

- From Tanya Trinkaus of the Roger Williams College Library:

"Can you imagine a library with walls which roll up into the ceiling to reveal courtyards, plants, grass, and flowers and access to the street? That's how the Philipsburg Jubilee Library in Philipsburg, St. Maarten, N.A. opens its 'doors' every day. Security? Evidently not a problem, according to staff who were amazed at such a consideration when asked. And they have videocassettes, audiocassettes, computers, and all those other library materials our libraries have."

The Bulletin staff wishes to thank JOE McGOVERN for the photographic skills he has shared with us. We are most grateful for his pictures of RILA's candidates for office which appeared in the July/August issue.



## jobline

The Rhode Island Library Association has established a minimum recommended salary of \$20,000 for a full-time beginning librarian in 1988.

**RETIRED OR SEMI-RETIRED LIBRARIAN, or Library Science Graduate Student.** Needed to develop and catalog a resource library of ephemeral/fugitive material at the Children's Museum of Rhode Island. Time commitment: one full day per week in 1988/89. Letter of application to Hetty Startup, Volunteer and Public Programs Coordinator, C.M.R.I., 58 Walcott Street, Pawtucket, RI 02860, by September 30, 1988.

**PUBLIC LIBRARY DIRECTOR:** Full responsibility for administering library in town of 6800 in process of building a new library. MLS and three years public library experience required. Competence and computer technology, public relations, grant-writing, staff and fiscal management important. Salary negotiable depending on experience and qualifications with a minimum of \$24,000. Send resume to: Trustees of West Bridgewater Public Library, 159 West Center Street, West Bridgewater, MA 02379. Closing date extended to 30 September 1988.

**BRANCH INFORMATION/ADULT SERVICES LIBRARIAN:** The East Providence Public Library System seeks a competent, enthusiastic individual to assume responsibility for coordination of information and reference services at three branches. Duties include selection and maintenance of adult non-fiction and reference materials, adult programming, and supervision and scheduling of support staff at one Branch Library. Requires ALA-accredited MLS and at least two years experience in reference and information services. Some supervisory experience preferred. Salary: \$20,645 - \$24,615; increase in process of negotiation; excellent fringes. Resume, letter of application and three references by October 21, 1988 to Raymond Benoit, Personnel Director, City of East Providence, 145 Taunton Avenue, East Providence, RI 02914. An Equal Opportunity Employer.

## ALA PASSES RESOLUTION ON FBI'S LIBRARY AWARENESS PROGRAM

At its annual conference in July, ALA passed a resolution opposing the FBI's Library Awareness program. As of May 10, 1988, ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom has written documentation or press accounts of sixteen visits by the FBI to academic libraries, three to public institutions, and one to the Information Industry Association.

Throughout the year, the Intellectual Freedom Committee, under the chairmanship of C. James Schmidt, the Office of Intellectual Freedom, and the leadership of ALA has monitored the FBI's visits to libraries, and has maintained a liaison with legislators, keeping them in constant awareness of the ALA's opposition to what is regarded as a basic intrusion of privacy and a violation of First Amendment rights.

In her letter of May 5, 1988, to Vermont Senator, Patrick Leahy, Chair of the Subcommittee on Technology and the Law, Judith Krug, Director of the OIF, states ALA's position:

The American Library Association considers the right to privacy an integral part of the First Amendment right to information. It is our belief that any individual should have not only the right to seek and gain access to all publicly-available information, but also the right to have the seeking and use made of such information remain confidential. The specter of having the FBI, or its surrogates, gazing over one's shoulder, following one through the stacks and to the photocopy machine, and making reports on database searches or items requested through interlibrary loan, must, perforce, have a "chilling impact" on the First Amendment rights of each and every one of us.

The following resolution, adopted by the IFC on July 12 was approved by the membership:



## RESOLUTION IN OPPOSITION TO FBI LIBRARY AWARENESS PROGRAM

WHEREAS, The Federal Bureau of Investigation Library Awareness Program is of paramount concern to the library community, and

WHEREAS, the attempts by the American Library Association through letters of inquiry, Freedom of Information Act requests, and offers to meet with FBI representatives in order to secure full background information from the FBI concerning the scope of its activities under the FBI Library Awareness Program and similar programs have been mostly in vain, and

WHEREAS, The LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS and the American Library Association's Code of Ethics clearly provide that information available to the general public be provided to all on an equal and confidential basis, and

WHEREAS, The American Library Association policy #53.4, Governmental Intimidation, an Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights states:

The American Library Association opposes any use of governmental prerogatives which leads to the intimidation of the individual or the citizenry from the exercise of free expression,

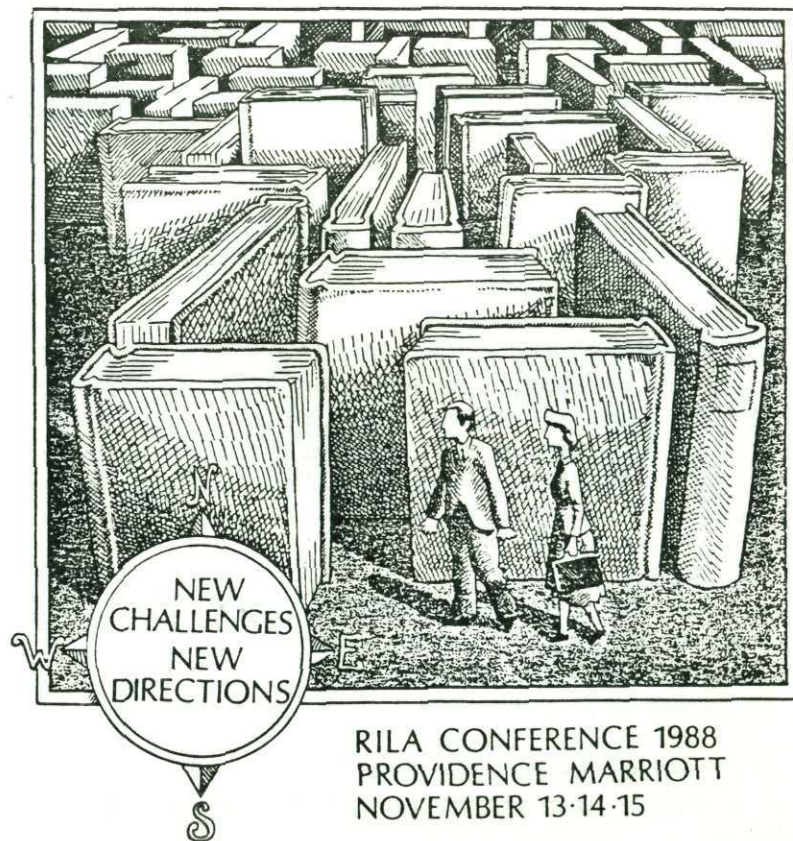
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the American Library Association go on record in condemnation of the FBI Library Awareness Program and all other related visits by the Bureau to libraries where the intent is to gain information, without a court order, on patrons' use and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the American Library Association use all appropriate resources at its command to oppose the program and all similar attempts to intimidate the library community and/or to interfere with the privacy rights of library users by the FBI, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be forwarded to the President of the United States of America, the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Technology and the Law, the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights, and to the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Information on the FBI Library Awareness program has been made available through an IFC Memorandum of May 18, 1988. It is available in its entirety from the Bulletin. Copies of this resolution, and others passed at ALA are available from the Bulletin, or Carol DiPrete, ALA Councilor.





RILA CONFERENCE 1988  
PROVIDENCE MARRIOTT  
NOVEMBER 13-14-15

#### RILA CONFERENCE COMMITTEE SCHEDULES PROGRAMS by Molly McGetrick

The Northern Region Children's Librarians will sponsor a program on the issue of "latchkey children" and libraries at the 1988 Rhode Island Library Association's Conference.

According to Margery Dumaine, Children's Librarian at the Weaver Library in East Providence, the program is viewed as being chiefly informational, with a panel discussion by local children's librarians. "The problem is really one of unattended children who are disruptive," she says. Obviously there is no objection to unattended children who come to use the library, but when children come to the library because there is no adult at home, then the responsibilities of library staff members become much greater.

The issue was discussed at the July meeting of the American Library Association, which plans to issue a statement shortly. Also, the New England Library Association will take up the discussion at its conference October 23-25.

Two videotapes will be featured as part of the program: a Peter Jennings segment on libraries and the latchkey child, and a Channel Six interview with members of the Northern Region Children's Librarians on the role of libraries in dealing with latchkey children and the experiences of Rhode Island librarians.

It may not be a problem that is apparent to all right now, but as Margery Dumaine points out, "Librarians may have to think about the future."

Another program planned is entitled "See the World: International Librarianship and You." Have a bit of wanderlust? Tired of the domestic scene? Or would you simply like the opportunity to practice your profession abroad? At this year's RILA Conference, Dena Jensen of Rhode Island College will speak on her experience as an "exchange librarian," in England and the opportunities available in international librarianship.

Molly McGetrick is a cataloger at the Providence Public Library, and a member of the Conference Committee.



## A CALL FOR TEMPORARY/PART-TIME LIBRARIANS

The Publications Committee is currently running a series in the Bulletin called, "Alternatives to Librarianship." As a result of this series we have determined that there is a need in the library community to publicize those librarians (MLS) interested in working part-time hours or as temporary librarians. This list of librarians would include those willing to work weekends, evenings, and as temporary replacements for those on vacation, sick leave, paternity leave, or sabbatical. Institutions needing a part-time/temporary librarian could then access this list to fill their need. If this program is successful, the listing will be kept updated and institutions can contact Linda Walton for names which fill their needs.

All librarians interested in having their names included in this listing should complete the form below and submit it to:

Linda Walton  
Butler Hospital  
345 Blackstone Boulevard  
Providence, RI 02906

When filling out the form be as specific or broad as fits your need. Linda will contact individuals if she is unclear about your statement. If you have any questions please call her at 456-3869.

### TEMPORARY/PART-TIME LIBRARIAN

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

REGION(S): (i.e. Providence, Island, Northern, Western, Southern, etc.)

TIME(S): (i.e. days, evenings, weekends, weekly, monthly, etc.)

INSTITUTION: (i.e. academic, public, school, special, etc.)



# Booktalk!

## 3

by Joni Bodart-Talbot

Summer 1988 388pp. ISBN 0-8242-0764-5. \$28 U.S. and Canada, \$32 other countries

*Offering 500 booktalks as entertaining as they are persuasive, Booktalk! 3 provides ready-to-use material designed to turn students and library patrons into avid readers. Written and compiled by Joni Bodart-Talbot, Booktalk! 3 is the perfect way of bringing readers and books together.*

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*The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula LeGuin, and *A Zoo in My Luggage* by Gerald Durrell. Booktalks are arranged alphabetically by title, and include bibliographies by author, age level, and theme and genre.

### Titles featured in Booktalk! 3

- *Dakota Dugout* by Ann Turner
- *Growing Up* by Russell Baker
- *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte
- *The Celery Stalks at Midnight* by James Howe • *Beyond the Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier
- *The SeaWolf* by Jack London
- *The Snarkout Boys and the Baconburg Horror* by Daniel Pinkwater • *Glory Road* by Bruce Catton • *Catch-22* by Joseph Heller
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- *The Girl with the Silver Eyes* by Willo Davis Roberts • *Cracker Jackson* by Betsy Byars



### Also of Interest:

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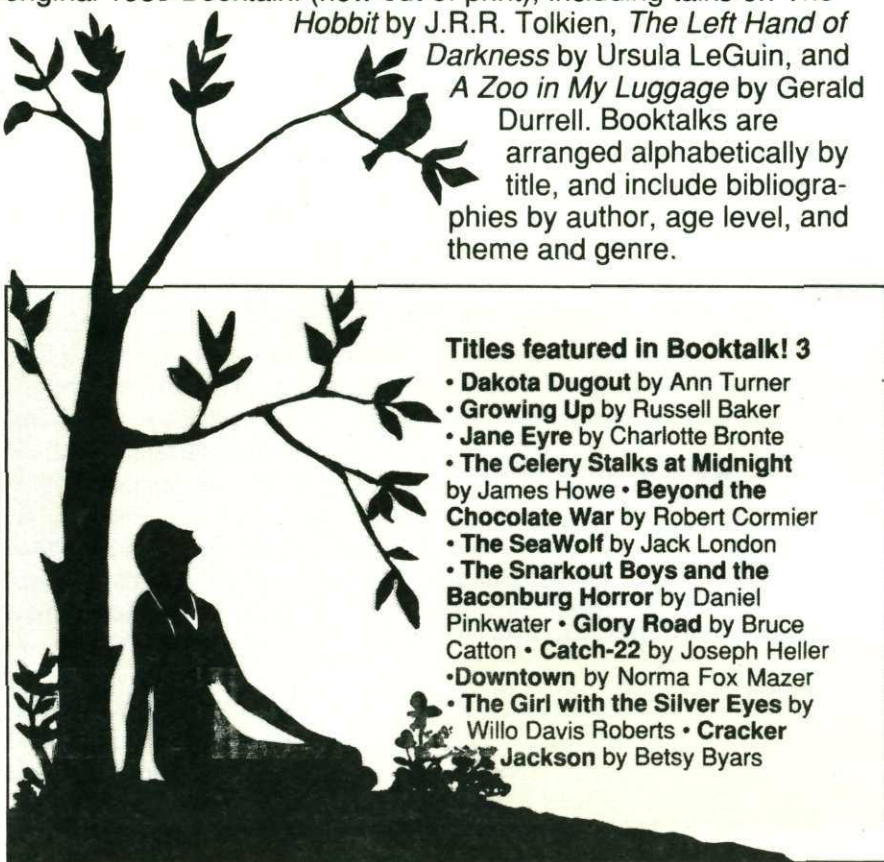
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September 24-October 1 is Banned Books Week. As a librarian who has been a member of the Intellectual Freedom Committee for six years, the concept behind Banned Books Week is a familiar one. Indeed, it is so familiar as to be taken for granted.

Therefore, when a friend and I were working over library documents on the word processor, and she caught sight of the words "banned books," she said, "How interesting. What's that mean?" I gulped and stammered out something about censorship and how many of the world's great books, Huck Finn, or even the Bible, had at one time or another been "banned."

Earlier in this issue of the Bulletin, Steve Thompson refers to his attendance at an IFC workshop, as "believers talking to believers," and perhaps, we as librarians tend to do that, and to accept some of our greatest principles almost casually.

Thus, it is almost helpful when a cause celebre occurs that reminds us again of how crucial these principles really are. Such an event has occurred this summer in the explosive reaction to Martin Scorsese's film from the novel of Nikos Kazantzakis, The Last Temptation of Christ.

As a member of the IFC, and a "believer" in First Amendment rights, still I have had moments of hesitation when the committee examined rock music lyrics two years ago, and I wondered if the PMRC (Parents' Music Resource Center founded by Tipper Gore) didn't really have a point. Or when the IFC did a program on the Meese Commission report, and we read some of the material that makes up the bulk of the report in its Addenda. I wondered "Is this what 'freedom of speech' is all about?"

Thus, when an issue emerges that is clear and that one can support, without question, it is a relief to find that beliefs are still strong, and that support can be given to that issue without reservation.

That issue has nothing to do with religion (though I would posit that any novel or film that makes one think through his own religious ideas has its own raison d'etre). The issue is every man's right to read or to see any work of his choice.

In the case of The Last Temptation of Christ, we are dealing with one of the major writers of world literature in the twentieth century, the author of the vastly popular novel and film of the sixties, Zorba the

Greek, and the powerfully written The Greek Passion, which also deals with the proximity of the human to the divine.

Though critical analyses of his work vary in the thirty years since his death, we are still talking about an author who was a candidate for the Nobel Prize in 1957, "losing" to none other than Albert Camus. We are talking about a writer about whom, the great Albert Schweitzer said, "Since I was a young boy, no author has made such a deep impression upon me as Nikos Kazantzakis. His work has depth and durable value because he has experienced much and in the human community has suffered much and yielded much."

The Last Temptation of Christ has been opposed by religious groups before. When it first appeared in Greece in 1955, it was opposed by the Greek Orthodox Church (who later refused to celebrate a funeral Mass for Kazantzakis.) The English translation brought a similar reaction from the Roman Catholic Church in western Europe, and it was placed on the Index of Forbidden Books in this country. In 1960, fundamentalist Protestant groups sought to remove the novel from libraries, and were unsuccessful.

Out of curiosity, I checked the Public Library Catalog last week, and found listed seven works by Kazantzakis, including The Last Temptation. About the novel, Best Sellers, said "The Christ created here by Kazantzakis is definitely not the Christ of the Gospels...far from it. Kazantzakis has composed a fictional biography of Jesus that is written with passion, a colorful, lyric testimony of his, Kazantzakis's own anguished search for God."

At the same time, I checked the CLSI terminal and found eight copies of the novel in the system, all of which were checked out in August, except one copy which has been missing since 1983. We as librarians may assume that interest in the works of Kazantzakis is, and will be, alive.

The Last Temptation of Christ has been a "banned book" in some quarters, but it is a work that has been approved for inclusion in public library collections, and indeed has appeared on reading lists for both religious and literary study groups. Whether you or I, or any patron of our libraries wishes to read the novel, or see the film, is not the issue. The issue is that each of us has the right to read or see the work, and trust our own minds to render judgment on its value.



## calendar

**OCTOBER 2-6:** LITA (Library and Information Technology Association) Second Annual Conference at Hynes Memorial Convention Center, Boston, Massachusetts.

**OCTOBER 5:** Meeting of North Atlantic Health Science Libraries (NAHSL) 1988 Annual Meeting, Wychmere Harbor Club, Harwichport, MA. For more information contact Terry Simeone, (508) 793-6421.

**OCTOBER 18:** YART, "Loss of Library Materials," Harmony Public Library, 9:00 AM for coffee; 9:30 AM for meeting.

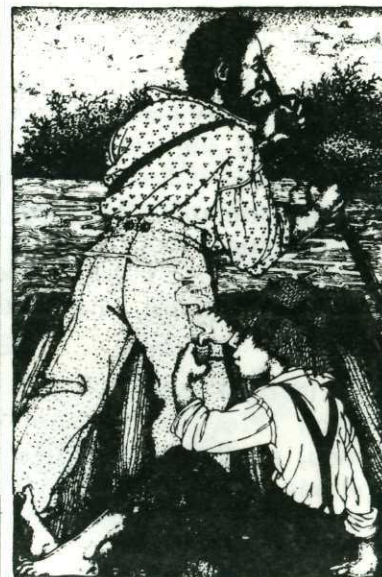
**OCTOBER 23-25:** New England Library Association (NELA) Annual Conference, Sturbridge, Massachusetts.

**NOVEMBER 14-20:** Children's Book Week.

As librarians we can be proud of the work of our Intellectual Freedom Committees throughout the country, proud of our record on The Last Temptation of Christ, and proud to celebrate Banned Books Week with conviction and enthusiasm.

(Information for the preceding editorial was obtained from the Public Library Catalog, 10th edition, 1980; Contemporary Literary Criticism, Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism; Peter Bien, Kazantzakis scholar and translator, "Scorsese's Spiritual Jesus," New York Times, August 11, 1988; and the editor's own copies of Zorba the Greek and The Greek Passion, from which the Schweitzer quotation appears.)

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BOOKS  
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OCTOBER 1, 1988

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